

# HACKNEY HECKLER

TAKING THINGS ONE STEP FURTHER

FREE

No. 10 DECEMBER 1991

# FRAUD?

## ...this is DAYLIGHT ROBBERY!

At a time when most of us are already struggling to make ends meet, our "caring" council have announced plans to increase rents by up to £15pw in January.

We get next to nothing for the rent we already give them, apart from the privilege of having a roof over our heads! So when they say they've overspent, it's impossible to see what on as it certainly hasn't been on properly maintaining our homes or living conditions.

The now familiar cycle of the council and government blaming each other still goes on, while we're left to live with and pay for the problems they've created. However they don't always get their own way as non-payment of the Poll Tax has shown only too well.

### HYPOCRISY

The hypocrisy of the council knows no bounds. Hackney's housing boss Linda Hibberd has said they're considering not paying contractors if they're not giving the council value for money. Perhaps we should follow the council's example, because we're definitely not getting value for money from the council.

In Hackney there are 1,000s already doing this, either because they can't afford to pay the rent or are withholding the rent as part of a dispute with the council, who prefer to call this unofficial rent strike by the name of rent arrears.

In Camden the local council are

trying to increase rents by £16pw. However there have been mass meetings of tenants, with at least 15 estates voting against the rent increases and discussing ways of organising a rent strike. We will hopefully be following their example.

Rent rises, rundown estates, fraud and corruption are all symptoms of a council run by power hungry careerists whose contempt for working class people is only too plain to see. Their "drive against corruption" is a convenient way of shifting the focus away from the chaos they preside over, towards an attack on ordinary council workers. Just like they blame those who can't pay their rent or Poll Tax, for running down services and estates. In reality the corruption and fraud seeps down from the top but the council are trying to pull the wool over our eyes once again - trying to make out they're "squeaky clean" so we'll vote Labour in at the next general election.

### CORRUPT

Meanwhile under the surface they're the same old bunch of conniving



bastards they've always been: turning over local residents and council workers alike, to promote their own political careers. But not if we can help it. Read on for the real roots of fraud and corruption.

FIGHT

CRIMINALIZATION OF SQUATTING  
**RENT RISES**  
MORTGAGE - REPOSSESSIONS  
SLUM CONDITIONS

MARCH FOR BETTER HOUSING

Saturday **21st** December  
Assemble: 1.00 pm.  
Richborough House,  
Pembury Estate,  
Pembury Road E8.  
called by Hackney Housing Campaign



# RATS

## SINKING SHIP

Not only are half of Hackneys Labour councillors jumping ship, so are the council's top officers. We have been reliably informed that finance chief Mike Craig is taking early retirement - and his chief hit man and all round scumbag Steve Bundred is leaving very soon as well! Why are you leaving now boys? Before the good ship sinks, leaving us in your mess? Whatever the reason, these rats are leaving us in the sinking ship. We say: get rid of the lot of them - we couldn't do a worse job than what they've done, so what about running our estates and our workplaces ourselves!

## RACIST OPPORTUNITIES

Hackney Council keep telling us how committed they are to equal opportunities. Perhaps that's why they've employed Bernard Crofton as Director of Housing. When Crofton held the same job in Ealing he was found guilty of Racial discrimination! So when the council tell us they've employed him to use his past experiences of running housing and dealing with staff, it does make you wonder just what they're up to!

## RED TO BLUE

Following Councillor Medlin Lewis's disaffection to the Tories, it looks like Council Leader McCafferty could be going the same way. With general election fever coming to town he's finally shown his true colours and decided to change his front door from red to blue. Symbolic or what!!

## WHAT A CRACK

Latest promise by council bigwigs is to mend the increasing number of potholes and cracked paving stones on the streets of Hackney. But where's the first street for action. No other than deputy leader Tommy Sheppard's road Listria Park. No doubt when the rest of the councillors get their roads done the scheme will suddenly run out of cash.

# sack the bosses!

Few of us will shed any tears at the thought of those who have been ripping off local working class people, getting their comeuppance. However the investigations into fraud and corruption being carried out by the police and council has acted as a means by which the council has attacked it's workers.

Hackney Heckler has obtained a confidential report on the entire investigation. What is most noticeable is the glaring inequalities of the way lowly council workers are treated compared to those at higher levels. Here is an example: A Mr D Evans, manager in the Hall lettings department was found to be pocketing £1,000s to supplement his bloated salary. According to the report "the police treated the matter as a normal case of theft, issuing the individual with a warning"! He later left his job with no disciplinary hearing, promising to pay back the cash. Compare this to another case where a housing benefit worker claimed housing benefit from another borough by failing to disclose his employment. He was arrested and charged by the police and sacked by the council. A typical example of the police and council working together, protecting the fat cats at the top while those at the bottom carry the can.

Another interesting case involves Peter Smith, a former supervisor from the housing benefits office who's about to stand trial for major fraud. This is the very same man who proudly crossed the picket line during the 1990 pay strike and savagely criticised the strikers for "not working." So what was this claimants friend doing at work? Doing loads of fraud! As usual the real hypocrites are above us. It's them we should turn our anger on.

The council are just using intimidation as a means to cow the workforce. Local unions claim that at least 4 of the 12 council workers sacked so far are innocent and have been fittted up by senior management and councillors to "save face." In one such case, managers admitted that there was no evidence that the worker being disciplined had committed or benefited from any fraud, but he was sacked anyway because he was "a friend" of someone who had committed fraud, and evidence may turn up in the future.

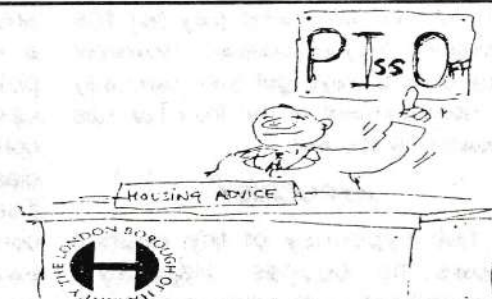
Not content with all this, the council are now politically vetting all their workers. Anyone who's found squatting can't work for the council, and if found out face the sack. And now they're going to force all their workers to pay their rent and poll tax. Some people may think that's fair enough. But council workers are like other workers - struggling to make ends meet, faced by bills they can't afford. Just because they work for the council doesn't mean they are the council. In fact they probably hate the council even more than the rest of us because they're getting it both ways - at home and at work. We've got to see it for what it is: intimidation of workers and hypocrisy of the highest order. What about vetting all the top bosses and councillors. Fraud, links with the masons and racism are a few things we could start with. But we reckon they should be vetted for being total bastards - that way we'd get rid of them all in one go!

# P.I.O's

The councils latest war against squatters is continuing with the use of the infamous PIO. Standing for "Protected Intended Occupier" the original use of which was to stop squatters being able to occupy property which had already been allocated to a future tenant.

The council are now evicting squatters with as little as 24hrs notice. By getting homeless people to accept a flat without viewing it first, the council is able to allocate property which is squatted. With up to 3,000 people forced to squat in Hackney, the result can only mean more homelessness. Also the people re-housed are getting a raw deal, being forced into sub-standard accommodation, with no choice!

Many PIOs are false, used as a convenient way to scare out squatters. But more than this they are central to the operation of "keys for cash" as has been explained elsewhere in the Hackney Heckler. Quite significantly when Liberal Councillor Colin Beadle was first informed of Keys for Cash his response to the use of false PIOs was "as far as I'm concerned it offers a nice quick and cheap way



for councils to get squatters out....who cares whether PIOs are being used for the wrong reasons." Beadle's not worried about people getting kicked out of their homes at a moments notice, after all, he's got a career to think about! (Incidentally, you can check this out with him directly on 081 - 802 2887).

The council's attacks on squatters is just a way of shifting the blame for the housing crisis away from themselves, whilst doing nothing to solve the real problems.

With the prospect of mass evictions due to sub-letting, "keys for cash" and possibly rent arrears, now is the time for us all to come together with one demand:-

**NO EVICTIONS - SOLVE THE HOUSING CRISIS.**



# "KEYS FOR CASH"

Keys for cash has existed in Hackney for many years. Just about every one you speak to knows of someone who's got their council tenancy by paying a bribe. The difference now is it's organised by people within the housing department, many of them in senior positions, with the possibility of certain councillors also having their fingers in the pie. This has allowed the racket to reach proportions previously unknown, raking in huge amounts of money for those operating it.

One of the main ways it has been working is as follows. When a flat becomes empty, either by tenants vacating it or more commonly squatters being evicted with false documents, rather than it going on the councils official lists

as ready to be re-let, people within the housing department enter the flat as fire damaged or beyond a reasonable state of repair. The keys to the flat are then sold, along with false rent books with rent money collected at the door.

On certain estates, such as the Woodberry Down estate it involves up to 50 flats. You can imagine the huge amounts of money being raked in at

## HOW IT WAS EXPOSED...

"Keys for cash" was exposed by a squatter living on Woodberry Down estate, who was convinced the council were evicting squatters on the estate illegally. He became suspicious of the fact that once a tenant left a flat, notices appeared immediately on the doors with a named "Protected Intended Occupier" (PIO). How often is the council efficient enough to fill an empty straight away, he asks himself. He then noticed what were meant to be council workers arriving to do up empty flats at 5am in the morning and leaving by 7am! The only people who seemed to be getting housed were young single men. To find out for sure he went to the area housing office saying he was the brother to one of those named as a PIO and asked for the keys to the flat. In this way he managed to get the keys and rent books to 5 flats on the estate!

He decided to contact Janet Jones the then Director of Housing. He told her what he knew, giving her copies of the false PIOs and rent books. She assured him she would look into the whole affair. However it was obvious he knew too much. A few days later he was confronted in his local pub by three men who offered him £800 and a council flat for life if he returned the keys and rent books and kept his mouth shut. He refused. At 3am that night they smashed their way into his flat. Rushing into the nearest room where his girlfriend was asleep, they attacked her with baseball bats, only stopping when the man they were after ran at them with a crowbar. The police and ambulance were called as the woman was badly injured in the attack. The police were far from sympathetic, no statement was taken with one of the officers saying "we know what's going on here, and we can understand if you want to do something about it yourself."

He tried to get back in touch with Janet Jones who never seemed to be prepared to talk with him. He finally managed to see her, and again told her all he knew including the attack on him and his girlfriend. She seemed very flustered and said she would look into it and contact him in a couple of days. The next thing he heard she had left her £50,000 a year post and was living in Brazil! He decided to tell all he knew to Liberal councillor Colin Beadle who duly contacted the police and media. So that is how the cat got out of the bag!

our expense. On this one estate over £250,000 a year in rent alone.

Council dictator McCafferty bleats "we will route out corruption where ever we find it...and will be assisting the police fully with their inquiries." Will the

search include his own back yard? Unfortunately not. The Mare St. mafia have no trouble covering their own tracks, as the Hackney Heckler has shown only too well in the past. With the investigation being headed by the council leadership, Liberal councillor Colin (watch my career) Beadle and Scotland Yard in secret, cover up and scapegoating is the most we can expect. After all the big fish who are really running the show have either packed their bags for far off places or are immune from exposure due to their influence and high standing.

The real reasons that corruption exists in Hackney is all to plain to see: a demoralised workforce due to budget cuts and slashed staffing levels, mismanagement and inefficiency partly due to central government

cuts. And on top of all this the arrogance of overpaid senior offices and incompetent councillors. Now that sounds like a good idea for an investigation.

## the great dictators

There's been much talk in the press recently that the council is not run by councillors at all, but by a small clique who act like a dictatorship, using bullying and favours and riding roughshod over the rest.

Although Labour councillors are only beginning to criticise them, this dictatorship has existed for several years and were given their powers by the rest of the council. The dictatorship is otherwise known as the policy and resource committee. For the last 3 years the council hasn't been able to do anything without the approval of this committee, made up of 3 councillors and 3 top council officers.

Dictatorships are well known for using bullying and favours to stay in power, and being riddled with corruption. Hackney council is no different. We all know there's corruption in Hackney, but the real blame lies with those who run a system which allows it to happen, the council dictators!

### NAMING THE JUNTA

Council leader - John McCafferty  
Deputy leader - Tommy Sheppard

Director of Finance - Mike Craig  
Chief Executive - Jerry White

- Hackney Heckler is a bi-monthly, free news sheet produced by Hackney Solidarity Group.

- We all live or work in Hackney and are sick of what we see around us. We want to do something about it. The Heckler aims to encourage struggle for a decent life for all.

- We welcome contributions and reports - what's happening on your estate? Which councillors and politicians are corrupt? Who's the worst boss in Hackney?

- We also welcome donations and help with distribution (we currently get rid of 10,000).

- If you want to guarantee getting the next issue send us an S.A.E.

- Write to us at: Hackney Heckler, PO Box 824, London N1 9DL.



# imagining...

Life can be pretty grim sometimes. A series of exhausting experiences that offer little excitement or pleasure. A series of struggles to survive in an unfriendly world. But despite all the pressures of money, work, home, shopping there are often glimpses of something so much better. A life that is really worth living, a life of excitement, pleasure and joy.

It's a good idea to sometimes think what could be. For a start, most work could be abolished. A lot of work is completely useless and only done to get some money. When all the useless work is abolished we would have so much more time to do the really important things...like talking to each other, playing together, having a laugh and a giggle. With the abolition of work would come the abolition of isolation and private misery. There would be one long collective party!

We could seriously think about meeting all our needs: decent housing and decent food would be nice. With what there is in this world that shouldn't be too difficult. All the empty mansions and food mountains could be put to some proper use.

But that brings us up against the

problem: those who run this society. These people ("the ruling class", "rich scum" or whatever they're called) don't give a toss about us. All they're interested in is more money for themselves - and that money is extracted from the present misery of our lives: lives that could be so much more if it wasn't for these toffs on top.

There is more to life than what they try to force down our throats every day. There's the chance of a world human community, of adventurous and intensely pleasurable lives. We can do it.

## SOLIDARITY ON THE SCREEN

If you liked this Heckler how about trying our monthly video screenings at the Rio Cinema or our discussion nights at the Unity Club, Dalston Lane.

Wed 29th January 7.30pm Video screening on the North of Ireland  
Tues 14th January 7.30pm Discussion on Pornography and censorship.

## Here are the "UNTOUCHABLES"



Hired by Hackney Council to snoop on Hackney residents, with the aim of finding people in "unlawful" possession of their homes, as well as updating the Poll Tax register at the same time. Not surprisingly, their reception hasn't been too welcoming so far, something Al Capone would have been proud of.



This news sheet is produced by Hackney Solidarity Group